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March 28, 2001      LB 772

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm a little breathless here, but we'll get ourselves oriented I hope. LB 772 is a bill that was introduced and heard by the Executive Board. As noted, there is a committee amendment that makes some changes in it, and then there's also an amendment to the committee amendment. LB 772 is the product of several discussions that I've held with other members of the Legislature, with members of the executive branch, with people in general. It is not something that is necessarily a new idea. In fact, the language that you see in LB 772 is cop...is patterned very closely after language that was adopted in Kentucky, where they have been running something they call the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Center since 1992. Nebraska has made very short-term efforts along the lines that are set out in LB 772. In the late eighties, we had a legislative initiative, I think it was called New Seeds. That was followed by a private initiative called New Horizons. The genesis, or the basic idea of LB 772 and the other initiatives that I'm talking about is a need for those of us who participate in the making of policy in state government to begin somehow to find a mechanism so that we can have a little longer perspective on what we are proposing, and to have a longer perspective not only about what we are attempting to do on any given day or any given session, but also to identify things that are happening in our state, trends, if you will, that will have...that are driving change in our state, and to begin examining those trends and to see where they will...what the implications are for the state of Nebraska. For example, we have all been aware for a considerable length of time that we have seen a population shift occurring in the state of Nebraska. But we have not been able to think about what the implications of that policy trend...of that fact are in terms of long-term policy for the state of Nebraska, nor have we had a mechanism to effectively respond or to develop a response. We've likewise recognized for a considerable amount of time that we have an aging population in the state of Nebraska. That becomes evident as we see the effects on Medicaid usage and the effects on our nursing homes. But again, we have not been able to focus on those trends within Nebraska to determine what the policy implications are and how we might respond, how it might affect, how those things might affect the future of the state of